

Midmonth Summary, March
Georgia SEC Report - March 2016

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Well, hello once again! Hope this finds you doing well. It's been a busy month. Some new faces, activities to tell you about, and things in the works.

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NEW TEAM MEMBERS

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We have a few new team members to tell you about. Ruth Lëber (WA4MDQ) has agreed to act as the web site manager for gaares.org. Ruth will work on the primary web site managing look and feel, document organization and placement, and processing the gathering and coordination of web content. She is currently in the process of familiarizing herself with the server and where the bones are buried. Jim Lynch (K4GVO), the chap that helps with our server administration and programming has been showing her around and getting her acclimated. Ruth contacted me earlier this week with a draft of our revised GAARES web site front page. We're evaluating new links for document placement and repositioning some of the current links. We expect to implement the new page sometime in the coming months. I am really pleased to have Ruth on board and look forward to her work.

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Frank Dean (K4SJR DEC Northwest) is assuming the role as DEC for Digital Communications. As some of you know Frank was pretty much already into this role. This formally gives him the ability to act on a state-wide basis. Frank will remain as DEC of Northwest District but assigning some of his District role to his well established District team. Look for Felton Floyd (AF4DN ADEC Northwest) and Jim Hadder (KE4ZX ADEC Northwest) to be among those assuming a greater District role. DECs and Digital ADECs can expect to hear from Frank in the future, if not already, for virtual meetings and coordination on digital training and activities.

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Roger Shaddick (N7BU) has been appointed DEC for Georgia State Defense Force (GSDF). We have had several meetings with Roger and his team member Lee Stone (KT4LS) learning how the GSDF is structured, where they commonly hold drills and the kind of support Georgia ARES can provide. We learned that they have already had assistance from a few county ARES groups from the North Atlanta area and elsewhere. If you are pondering what you can do with this year's SET, consider working with the GSDF to see if they can involve your group in one of their drill activities. One of their key needs is communications.

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Ken Reid (KG4USN EC for Atlanta) also serves as Net Manager for the State Hospital Net. Ken has been acting in this role for some time now. An addition now includes Stephen Jonas (K4SDJ EC Chatham) who is now acting Assistant Net Manager for the State Hospital Net. Stephen will be running the D-STAR part of the net from 2:30 until net closing. After the D-STAR net check-ins he will be staying on frequency and taking calls from anyone having trouble making contact with net control. The Georgia Hospital Net is the first Sunday of every month. Its primary frequency is 7185Khz (LSB) starting at 3pm. However, the Hospital net has several designated frequencies for both voice and digital. At 2:30 PM there is a less formal D-star net on reflector 30B before the formal net at 3pm. Go here for a complete overview of net frequencies, protocol, and participating hospitals:
<http://www.atlantaares.org/ga-hosp.-net.html>

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Tom Welty (N4TAW) has been appointed DEC for the Civil Air Patrol. We are still working on completing our coordinating activity with Tom to get familiar with their structure and coordinating how communications will take place. While the CAP covers the entire State like the Georgia State Defense Force we want to know what their primary areas of activity will likely be and what communications will be necessary to work with them. Once we have that information we'll get it out to those ECs and DECs so they are aware of the communication needs and potential activity.

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VOX ISSUES

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There's been a minor problem with folks using VOX (Voice Operated Transmission) on the Sunday State ARES Net where an unattended radio ends up transmitting background noise and possibly conversations that interfere with the net. It is probably best to simply not use VOX as the safest way of preventing an embarrassing situation and interference to net operations. Think of VOX as Voice Operated and possibly X-rated and turn it off - particularly on the Sunday night net.

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MONTHLY REPORT RE-WRITE

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After February's EC/DEC/ASEC monthly report problems and the persistent problems in past months Jim Lynch (K4GVO) and I decided it was time to overhaul the monthly reporting system. We have been plagued with orphan records, dropped records, multiple and truncated records, and getting report results mailed to all parties is tenuous. Attempts to patch it along the way have been frustrating and the tipping point has been reached. Jim has already begun writing the code but we expect it will be at least 2 to 3 months before we have a fully complete program ready for testing. One of the new features it will include will be an option to populate the fields with last month's report so that you do not need to type in the common information over again. You'll only need to change or update the entries that have changed since the previous month. If you exit the program - say half way through your entries for lack of complete information - the program will retain any entries you've already made and be available when you return to complete the report. At least two of our program testers who helped with testing the revised Georgia ARES database, Buzz Kutcher (K3GWK EC Butts County) and Wayne Chapman (KG5WU AEC North Fulton), will be conducting their very detailed testing of the revised monthly reporting program. Others may be included in the program testing. I'll try to update along the way. For the time being we will be nursing the existing program until we can get the new program in place.

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NEW GEORGIA WINMOR HF STATION

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Georgia now has another Winlink HF gateway. Lee McDaniels (WB4QOJ AEC Digital/PIO Paulding County) has established another Winmor digital HF station (WX4PCA-10) in Georgia located in Paulding County. Michael Crowe (AJ4GU McDonough, GA) has had his HF gateway running for some time now. Many Georgia Amateurs have regularly used Mike's gateway to get their Winlink E-mail traffic through. WX4PCA-10 operates on frequency 3589.5Khz, AJ4GU-10 operates on 7088Khz, and WA4DYD-10 operates on 28319Khz (note these are the dial frequencies). Here is a listing of the most frequent Georgia Amateur stations from the 30 days prior to March 15th who accessed WX4PCA:

wb3ilx Paulding county, w4dto Paulding county, aa4aw Paulding county, k4ldc Paulding county

ag4zr Coweta county, kg4usn Fulton county, w4byt Cobb county, ai4ak Cobb county

wa4qyy Bartow county, w4bwe Gwinnett county, k3gwk Henry county, kb4jz Colquitt county

nx4ac Colquitt county, w4dtx Cherokee county, wa4rg Peach county

k4hyj Whitfield county, wx4rca Rockdale county, k1kc Rockdale county

I received an update from Lee on Friday which shows WX4PCA is taking on more traffic from Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Mississippi with 57 connections and over 124KB of data from 43 stations.

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2016 SET

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Don't forget the parameters for this year's Simulated Emergency Test (SET) are posted on the GAARES web site. I have already received a report from George Olive (AI4UR EC DeKalb) who used a large public service event (Publix Georgia Marathon) as his 2016 SET event. George said "We did that in conjunction with Atlanta ARES (Ken Reid KG4USN EC Atlanta) and with the help of ARES and non-ARES members from the entire metro area. The event lasted from 0500 until 1400 on Sunday March 20, 2016. There were a total of 53 amateur radio operators providing communications on 3 nets. The race net coordinated the aid stations along the course as well as the race command. The SAG net dispatched vehicles to aid runners who needed to drop out of the race for medical reasons or that they were too tired to finish. A DStar net provided both voice and text communications to the 2 medical tents at Centennial Olympic Park. We did not count the messages on the race and SAG net, but there were hundreds over the duration of the event. We ran D-RATS on the digital net and utilized both a BBS system using the chat function and sent ICS-213 forms between net control and the 2 medical tents."

I do not expect many county ARES groups to have events of this magnitude.

While many ARES groups will be conducting their SET on a smaller scale I offer this as an example of how a local activity can be used for the SET and the variety of communications used.

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DIGITAL TRAINING IS GOING ON THE ROAD

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Frank Dean (DEC Northwest District/DEC Digital) is working on an approach to conduct training for the standard digital applications we use (Winlink, FLDigi, D-RATS) in Georgia. Frank is arranging with Gene Clark (SM W4AYK) in Albany to schedule a Saturday digital training session tentatively scheduled for April 30th. Frank is evaluating ways to present this training in other parts of the State over time. If your ARES group has an interest, speak with your DEC to communicate the interest and so that other district ARES groups can potentially be factored into the training.

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STATE D-RATS NETWORK

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Frank Dean (DEC Northwest District/DEC Digital) is starting up a State-wide D-RATS net beginning April 3rd between 5 and 6pm. Remember, you don't need a D-STAR radio to communicate with D-RATS. You can use D-RATS via the Internet to get familiar with the application and then take the next step of connecting it to a radio. The objective here is to get familiarity with the application so you can easily use it if you encounter it elsewhere or make it part of your personal digital radio capabilities. And, don't forget the Central District's new FLDigi net (PSK63) every Monday night at 8:30pm on 3583Khz offset 1000hz. NCS is Robert Garza (KK4TLG EC Monroe / Digital ADEC Central).

David AG4ZR, Section Emergency Coordinator